

16
The Cause of God's Wrath:

O R,

A Call to Repentance,

FOR THE
National Sin of SACRILEGE.

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D

At Cobham in SURREY,

JANUARY the 19th, 1704.

BEING THE
Day of the P U B L I C K F A S T.

By W. Tucker, Vicar of Cobham in Surrey.

Shew my People their Transgression, Isai. 58. 1.

When I say unto the Wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way to save his Life, the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity, but his Blood will I require at thy Hand, Ezek. 3. 18.

London: Printed by W. O. for Eben. Tracy, at the Three Bibles on London-bridge; W. Haves, at the Rose in Ludgate-street; and are to be sold by J. Nutt, near Stationers-hall. 1704.

To the R E A D E R.

I Am verily perswaded, that Sacrilege is the greatest Sin which *England* is guilty of. And if this my Opinion ben't grounded upon a Mistake, it must needs be confess'd, that nothing can be more seasonable than a Discourse concerning it upon a *National Fast*: And my Brethren the Clergy are highly to blame, that they don't frequently use their Endeavours to deliver the Kingdom from this cursed Iniquity. Pray God that what I have said may be follow'd with a good Success, and awaken those who believe *Sacrilege* is a Sin to appear against it, especially those that are by their Office oblig'd to't, lest they should be at last condemn'd for being false to their Trust.

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I

THE CAUSE OF GOD's Wrath.

Malachi III. 8, 9.

Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me: but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In Tithes and Offerings. Ye are cursed with a Curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole Nation.

THIS is a Truth which all *Christians* are agreed in, That National Wickedness is the Cause of National Punishments: And therefore tho' every publick Affliction don't always hold an exact Conformity to that particular Sin which procur'd it, yet this we may be sure of, that every publick Affliction which a People suffers, is the just Desert of their National Crimes. And therefore we must needs acknowledge, that the late terrible Tempest, which this Kingdom, and a great many other places in *Europe*, were plagued with, was brought upon the World by those various Crimes and different

Josb. 7. 12,
13.

Abominations which the several Countries are stain'd with. Hence it follows, that every Nation which hath felt this Severe Token of the Divine Displeasure, is under an indispensable Obligation to consider of their Doings, and to *put away the accursed thing from amongst 'em*, in order to prevent the like, or a more dismal Judgment. To this Purpose 'tis that our Sovereign the Queen has piously appointed a National Fast, and prudently enjoyn'd her Subjects to repent of those crying Sins that abound amongst us; the worst of which, if I am not much mistaken, is that horrible Villany mention'd in the Text, *We have robbed God*. We have robb'd him in his Tithes and Offerings as bad as ever the *Jews* did; nay, in this Wickedness we have gone beyond 'em, upon which score it may truly be said of us as it was of them, *Ye are cursed with a Curse, for ye have robbed God, even the whole Nation hath robbed him*. And if this ben't the very cause of *England's* Calamity, (for I can't positively say 'tis) yet this I affirm, and am certain of, that this is a Sin which justly deserves the Divine Displeasure, and calls aloud for a publick Repentance.

To convince you of which, I shall take this following Method:

1. I shall shew you what it is to rob God.
2. I shall endeavour to prove that *England* has robbed God of his Tithes and Offerings in a more abominable manner than ever the *Jews* did.
3. I shall demonstrate in several respects the prodigious Wickedness of this Sin.
4. I will plainly appear that we are under a Curse, and without a publick Repentance, we shall frequently be scourg'd with National Judgments.

1. What

1. What it is to rob God. By this Expression we are not to think that the Supreme Lord, the Infinite and Eternal Being, is liable to suffer Wrong; no, 'tis altogether impossible for wicked Men or apostate Spirits to injure Him in His Essence, or dispossess Him of any thing, in a proper sence; but the meaning of the words is evidently this: Tithes and Offerings are sacred things, they are things which in a peculiar Property and Relation do belong to God, and therefore when they are alienated, or taken away from that Use, and those Persons which He has reserv'd 'em for, God looks upon't as an extraordinary Crime, and will punish the Men that are concern'd in this Villany, not as Robbers of their Neighbours, but Robbers of Himself. And, in truth, 'tis very just that it should be so, for 'tis a plain case that he is robb'd to whom the Property belongs, and the Tithes and Offerings do evidently belong to God; for Tithes are His ancient Demaine, from the Creation of the World He hath reserv'd them to Himself, as is sufficiently demonstrated from the Practice of the Patriarchs, and the general Consent of all Nations, together with the Approbation and Command of God himself, and the constant Resolution of His Church Universal. Tithes are holy unto the Lord, and the use of 'em He hath confer'd upon His peculiar Servants, as a fit Reward for their Office; and thus it hath always been, ever since there was a Priest upon Earth, and none else can justly possess 'em now, unless it can be prov'd that God hath disannul'd His First Grant, and bestow'd His Inheritance upon another Order of Men. And as this is the Case of *Tithes*, so likewise it may be said concerning *Offerings*, they are God's peculiar Right and Property, and may never
law-

See Sir Henry
Spelman, de
non remeran-
dis Ecclesiis,
p. 54, &c.

Lev. 27. 28.

Numb. 16.

18, 37, 38.

Mr. Jof. Mede
lib. 1. p. 121.

lawfully be imploy'd, but for His Use, and the Maintenance of His Service. By *Offerings* we are to understand, every thing that is devoted to God, or given to his Ministers for the maintenance of their Religion, whether it be Money, or Goods, or Land: Every devoted thing is the Lord's, and it is not in the Power of him that gave it to recal his Grant, much less is it lawful for other Men to do it, unless they can prove that the things offer'd to God were such as the Donor had no power to bestow, or that God himself has relinquish'd his Right in the Gift: In either of these Cases it may justly be done, but otherwise 'tis gross Sacrilege, even robbing of God, to alienate his Offering to Secular Uses. And to prevent rash Attempts upon Dedicated things, 'tis here worthy to be consider'd, that neither the Sinfulness of the Donor, nor yet the Defects and Blemishes which attend the Dedication, is always sufficient to make an Offering void. An Instance of this we have in *Korah* and his Company, whose Service was so highly displeasing to God, that he consum'd 'em in the very Act, by a sudden and miraculous Fire; and yet when all was done, He gave this Commandment to *Moses*, saying, *Speak unto Eleazar, the Son of Aaron the Priest, that he take up the Censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the Fire yonder; for they are hallowed. The Censers of these Sinners against their own Souls, let them make of them broad plates for a covering of the Altar: for they offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed.* "Mark, (says a great Divine) tho' they were offer'd by sinful Men, and in a sinful manner, and were not to be used any more for "Censers, yet they must be applied to some other holy "Use, because they were become sacred by having been

"been offer'd unto the Lord. To this I may also add, That the Wickedness of those who occupy the Place of God's Ministers, is no sufficient Excuse neither for People to alienate the Tithes and Offerings of the Lord; for this was the very case of the *Jews* in the days of *Eli*, they neglected and abhor'd the Practice of carrying up Sacrifices to *Shiloh*, because they knew that the Priests *Hophni* and *Phinehas* would grossly prophane 'em: And yet, for all this, the Scripture expressly tells us, 1 *Sam.* 2. 24. that in so doing the People transgressed. The same thing was acted over again in the days of *Malachi*; for the corrupt High-Priest *Eliashib* spent the Revenues of the Church in a very irregular manner, upon which horrid and manifest Abuse of Sacred things, the People refus'd to pay both their Tithes and Offerings, for fear they should contribute to the Sin of the Priests, and the Corruption of God's Worship, (or at least they made this a Cloak for their Covetousness) and yet even for this *Nehemiah* reprov'd 'em, and the Prophet in the Text calls them *Robbers of God*; and if this Charge was just upon the *Jews*, then we of this Nation deserve it too. For,

2. *England* has robbed God of his Tithes and Offerings in a more abominable manner than ever the *Jews* did. This every-body must own to be true, if it can but be made appear that Tithes and Oblations are as due to God now from us, as they were from the *Jews* in the time of *Malachi* the Prophet; And that they be so, we have such good reason to believe, that was it not out of Prejudice and Worldly Interest, it would pass for a certain and undoubted Truth. For,

1st, The Payment of Tithes was no particular Injunction laid upon the *Jews* alone, as is sufficiently evi-

'Tis the Opinion of the Learned, that *Malachi* prophesied in the days of *Nehemiah*; see the *Assen. Annot.* and *Pool's Synopfis.*

dent from those expresse Testimonies which the Scripture gives us, that they were dedicated and paid for a great many Ages before *Moses* was born; for even *Abraham* himself paid Tithes to *Melchisedec*, and his Grandson *Jacob* dedicated the Tenth to God; and 'tis highly probable that the Original of this Practice was deriv'd from *Adam*, who had his Instructions immediately from God: For how else could it be that those Patriarchs learnt it? 'Tis unreasonable to say that they pitch'd upon this part by Chance, for Chance is never the Author of a constant Practice. If *Abraham* had a Fancy to make choice of a Tenth, 'tis twenty to one if *Jacob* had done so too; but now, since this, and no other part, is recorded to be given, and since God liked and approved of the Gift, by blessing the Givers, and did afterwards confirm this Proportion in his written Law, 'tis more than probable that the first payment of Tithes was no Human Invention, and beyond contradiction plain, that it is much more ancient than the *Levitical* Precepts, and therefore could not be an Institution peculiar to the *Jews*. But,

2dly, Tithes are due to God from every Nation, as we have all imaginable reason to believe, because the payment of them was generally, if not universally, practiced amongst the *Gentiles*: They did exactly observe to pay both for quantity the Tenth, and for quality the best of their Encrease, and therefore they must needs be taught this by a long-continued Practice, taken from a Divine Instruction at the first: "For (saith a judicious Author) is it not an utter Impossibility that so many millions of People should all, by meer accident, stumble upon the very same Number? And that they should think this Number to be so sacred,

The Author
of the Essay
concerning
the Divine
Right of
Tithes, p. 29.

“ sacred, as that none ought to offer a less Quantity,
“ without committing a great Sin? That none should
“ know the beginning of this Custom? That no Histo-
“ ry should mention it? These are things so unaccount-
table, that it is not left in any Man's power, who will
seriously consider of the matter, to believe that Tithes
were a Human Invention, or that the Notion of it
could have spread it self as it did, so universally thro'
the World, if it had not descended from our first Pa-
rent, and so flow'd from the Fountain through the
many divided Streams. For though there be some
would have it, that the Practice of paying Tithes was
nothing else but an Imitation of the *Jews*, yet this Opi-
nion of theirs must needs be a Fancy; as is sufficiently
demonstrated by several Authors, from the universal
Practice of the World. The *Jews* (one of them right-
ly observes) were but a very contemptible People in
the Eyes of the neighbouring Nations, and upon that
account 'tis highly probable that they did not admire
their Manners, but rather scorn'd and abhorr'd 'em.
At least 'tis no ways likely, that they should so affect
their Customs, as to learn such an expensive Worship
of 'em as would cost them the Yearly Tenth of their
Possessions. But however, suppose for once that some
of their next Neighbours had follow'd their Example,
and, amongst other things, learnt to pay Tithes, yet
what did this signify to the remote parts of the World?
How came it about that the Nations at a prodigious
distance should do so too? And yet thus it was both
in *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa*, People that had no know-
ledge of the *Jews* were acquainted with this Practice,
which they could not possibly learn, either from *Abra-
ham* or his Offspring. Hence it must be very reason-
able

Sir H. Spelman, in his
larger Work
of Tithes.

Dr. Cumber's
Vindication
of the Divine
Right of
Tithes; and
the Author of
The Snake in
the Grass, in
his Essay of
Tithes.

nable to conclude, that the payment of Tithes is of a Divine Original, due to God in every Nation, and that the Knowledge of this matter was learnt from *Adam*.

3^{dly}, We have cause to believe, that now under the Gospel God has not relinquish'd his Right to this part of our Substance; but that Tithes and Offerings are as due to Him from us, as ever they were from the *Jews* or any other Nation, in the Times of old; of which the Apostle *St. Paul* (*1 Cor. 9. 13, 14.*) thus speaks to the Christian Converts, *Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the Temple, and they which wait at the Altar are partakers with the Altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.* The meaning of which words seems plainly to be this, You may easily understand what the Mind and Will of God is under the New Testament, by considering what his Pleasure was under the Old, under which Dispensation you all know that the *Levites* were his Ministers, and for their Maintenance He gave them His own peculiar Inheritance, even Tithes, and every thing else, whether Goods, or Money, or Land; which any one offer'd to God for the Furtherance of Religion. Even so under the New Testament God's Will is the same; He hath ordain'd, that the Gospel Ministry should have an honourable and a certain Maintenance, after the manner of the *Levitical* Law. God hath ordain'd a Maintenance for the Ministers of the Gospel, even so as He did for the *Levitical* Ministry; He has not left his Evangelical Priesthood to live upon Peoples Benevolence, but He has bestow'd upon 'em His own Revenue, even Tithes, and every thing that is dedicated or offer'd to Him, for the Maintenance of Religion: For
else

The Cause of God's Wrath.

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else, what is it that the Lord has ordain'd? Has He ordain'd, that every one should give what he please, and do what they thought good, towards the Support of his Officers? Why, there was no need of an Order for this, for that they would certainly do without any Direction or Command at all: Therefore the meaning of the Apostle must needs be, That as God bestow'd his Tithes upon the *Levites*, so He expects they should be paid to the Ministers of the Gospel. And thus the Primitive Christians understood St. *Paul*, as is plain by their Actions; for though they could not pay Tithes in a regular manner, because the Laws of the Countries conferr'd them upon others, yet, as soon as they could, they paid them to the Ministers of Christ, as a just Reward for the Gospel. They knew that the Tenth had in all Ages been constantly look'd upon as God's Part, and every where paid to those that occupied the Place of his Ministers, and hearing that Christ had ordain'd a Provision for his Ministers now under the Gospel, as the Priests had under the Law, they easily understood that he meant it of Tithes and Dedicated Things. And therefore, though a Tenth was the Sum fixt upon by God, yet such was the Zeal of the Primitive Christians, that in the days of the Apostles they gave all that they had; *For as many as had Houses or Lands freely sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid it down at the Apostles feet.* And this was no sudden Heat of Devotion, which was soon over, but, as the Records of those Ages prove, it lasted for a great many Years, insomuch that the Clergy were maintain'd answerable to their Character; the Tenth was then esteem'd but the least and the lowest Measure of Christian Oblations.

Dr. Camber
of Tithes.

Acts 4. 34.

See the Essay
concerning
the Divine
Right of
Tithes, p. 116.

tions to the Ministers of the *Blessed JESUS*.

But here possibly 'twill still be objected, That there is no express Precept in all the New Testament for the payment of Tithes, and therefore it is only a Supposition, that the Apostle St. Paul had a design to make it a Christian Duty, when he said, *They who wait at the Altar are partakers with the Altar; even so Christ hath ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*

To this I answer; 'Tis such a Supposition as is extremely reasonable, and considering the Practice of the Church in the First Ages of the Gospel, it may justly be look'd upon but little less than a positive Command; but as for a Command in express words, I own, that there's none in all the New Testament, for, in truth, there was no need of it, (any more than there was of a new Precept concerning the Sabbath) for God's Title to Tithes was sufficiently settled before, and generally receiv'd in all Nations of the World. And there was no Doubt to be made, since Christ had ordain'd a Maintenance for his Ministers, suitable to that of the *Levitical* Priesthood, but that both the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, upon their Conversion to the Faith, certainly understood that Tithes were to continue: And so they did, for 'tis beyond contradiction, that the Church Universal have actually paid Tithes to the Ministers of Christ on these general Directions.

Before I conclude this Particular, I'll add one thing more from the New Testament, to prove, That the Ministers of the Gospel have as much Right to receive Tithes as ever the *Levitical* Priests had: And 'tis this; That in the Seventh Chapter of *Hebrews* we are

are plainly taught, that Christ himself, by vertue of his Priesthood, is a Receiver of Tithes; and that there was never any Type of him as Priest, but he receiv'd Tithes, and that not upon any other account, but only by vertue of his Office: So that 'tis a plain case, that Tithes did originally belong to Christ, of whom *Melchisedec* was a Figure or Representation; and the Personal Priesthood of Christ being fix'd, unalterable and eternal, it must needs follow, that the Rights belonging to his Priesthood are also perpetual; and forasmuch as he has ordain'd an Order of Men to be his Ambassadors, and to stand in his stead to the Church, 'tis very probable that Tithes are due to 'em in the Right of their Master. And of this Opinion were the Reverend Divines of the *Westminster Assembly*, for in their Annotations on this place they thus expresse themselves; "And seeing Our Lord remain-
" *eth for ever a Priest after the Order of Melchisedec*,
" why should not Tithes belong to him, and in him
" to those who in his stead exhort us to be reconcil'd
" unto his Father?

See Dr. Reynolds's Discourse on Psal. 110. p. 473.

Heb. 7. 2.

From what I have said I hope it plainly appears that Tithes are as due to God, now under the Gospel, as ever they were from the Jews in the Days of *Malachi*; or at least there are such Reasons to think so, that without a new Revelation 'tis altogether impossible to be sure of the contrary. Upon which account it must needs be confess'd, that the best and the safest Course is, to pay Tithes to God, lest the doing otherwise should at last be found what now it appears, even the Damnable Sin of *Sacrilege*. But yet if it was only a doubtful Case, this would be some mitigation of the Crime; but, alas, 'tis too plain to be question'd, (by any one that believes the Gospel)

Gospel) whether *England* has robb'd God, or no; because if it should be true, That Tithes ben't due by a Divine Right, yet the Wickedness of this Kingdom is still the same; and it may be said of Us altogether as truly as it was of the *Jews*, *Ye have robbed God.* For,

4thly, This we are infallibly sure of, that under the Gospel God did accept of such things as were offer'd or dedicated to Him for the Maintenance of His Ministers, and after the Grant was made, God was the Proprietor and Owner of what was given; so that it was not in the power of Him that made the Donation to take it back again, or apply it to any other Use. An Instance of this we have in *Ananias and Sapphira* his Wife, *Acts* 5. And this is the Case of Tithes and Offerings here in *England*; if they are not due to God by a Divine Right, yet they are due to Him, because they were given, granted, and dedicated to Him by those that had a just Power to do it; for they have been establish'd by all the Authority, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, which the Nation could afford; all the Right that the Donors were invested with was made over to God, by the express Vows of Kings and Parliaments, together with all the solemn Imprecations, and the most heavy Curse that could be imagin'd, upon themselves and their Posterity, if ever they should retract or take back these Devoted Things; and these Vows and Grants have also been confirm'd by *Magna Charta*, and all the rest of our Laws both before and after it, even down to *Henry the Eighth*; so that upon this score there can be no Dispute, but that Tithes and Offerings here in *England* are as due to God as ever they were in *Israel*,

See Dr. Cum-
ber, in his
Historical
Vindication of
the Divine
Right of
Tithes, Part 2.
Chap. 8.
Sir Hen. Spel-
man's English
Counsels,
Tom. I.

for that which is granted to God must needs be God's. Every Devoted Thing, whether it be Money or Goods, or Houses, or Estates, it is the Lord's: And therefore St. Peter reasoning with *Ananias*, thus argues the matter, saying, *Why hath Satan filled thy Heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the Land? While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine Heart? Thou hast not lyed unto men, but unto God.* *Ananias* might have chose whether he would have offer'd his Estate or no, but after he had given it to God, it was perfect *Sacrilege* to keep any of it back. The same may be said of Tithes and Offerings here in *England*, if they were not originally due to God, if they are not due by a Divine Right, yet now we must pay 'em, for we are bound to do it, by the sacred Sanction of an Oath, and by the firmest Laws that Man could invent; they are as due to God as ever *Ananias* could make the price of his Land, which every-body must own was as much God's Due as any thing could be.

Thus, I hope, I have made it fully, and plainly, and certainly appear, that Tithes and Offerings do as justly belong to God, and are altogether as much due from the People of *England* as ever they were from the *Jewish* Nation; which if they are, then it can't be denied, but that *England* has robb'd God in a worse and a more abominable manner than ever the *Jews* did; for, though the *Jews* were guilty of *Sacrilege*, yet they never made a Law to justify their Wickedness; but here in this Nation, to the Scandal

There are in
England
3845 Parish
Churches,
whose Tithes
are taken
from 'em.
Cambd. Brit.
Division of
Britain.

of Christianity, God is robbed of his Tithes and Offerings by an Act of Parliament, and the Ministers of the *Blessed 3 E S U S*, in several thousand Parishes, are depriv'd of their Maintenance by that unrighteous Decree, whilst those who have nothing to do with Sacred Things are put in the possession of the Lord's Inheritance. Horrible Wickedness! a Wickedness so great, that 'tis next to impossible to be guilty of a worse, for we have Robbed the Everlasting God, we have Robbed him in a more abominable and prodigious manner than ever the *Jews* did; we have done that which the very Heathens themselves would blush and be ashamed to do. And that you may the better be sensible of the great Evil which the Nation has done, I proceed,

3. To demonstrate in several respects the prodigious Wickedness of this Sin.

1. It is a depriving God of his Honour; for if the Ministers of the Gospel are Ambassadors for Christ, as *St. Paul* expressly tells us they are, whose Office it is to treat of Peace, and to solicit a fair Correspondence between Heaven and Earth, is it not then an Affront to the Deity, if these His Officers are abus'd, and slighted, and depriv'd of a Convenient Subsistence? And are there not some Thousands of them thus treated in *England*, by reason of these cursed Impropriations? Don't we all know, that by being thrust out of the Lord's Inheritance, they are by no means provided for, as Persons that are the principal Ministers of the Kingdom of God? Is it not too plain to be denied, that instead of keeping Hospitality, as God expects they should, they are them-

themselves forc'd to live upon Benevolence? The Apostle St. Paul tells us, That the Presbyters that rule well should be counted worthy of double Honour, especially those who labour in the Word and Doctrine. 1 Tim. 5. 17. And is it not really and truly an Affront to the Divine Majesty, that instead of such an Honourable Maintenance, they should be put off with a Poor and a Beggary Stipend, while that handfom Provision in Tithe and Lands, which the Piety of former Ages dedicated to God for 'em, is altogether taken away, and bestow'd upon such as have no Right to touch it. Is not this a very bold Attempt? Is it not a very daring Sin, thus to impoverish the Ministers of Christ? Don't this *Robbing of God* look like a Defiance of Him, and as if it was design'd for a Challenge, to awaken His Vengeance, and try whether or no His Omnipotent Arm can do Right to His Honour?

There are above 2000 Parishes in England, in which the Ministers Allowance exceeds not 25 l. per ann. and many of them are not half so much, of which Cobham is one.

2. This kind of *Sacrilege*, the robbing God of His Tithes and Offerings, is also a prodigious Wickedness, because 'tis a very great hindrance to the Worship of Christ, and tends more to the Destruction of it than the murdering of his Ministers; for when Men are taken away, there is yet Hope that others will be rais'd up in their Places; but if the means of their Maintenance be remov'd, then of consequence there will certainly follow even a Decay of the Profession it self: And this, we see, it does in a great many places, for One Minister has the care of Two or Three Parishes, because neither of 'em singly can afford him a Maintenance; which makes Pluralities absolutely necessary, (that in other Cases is a great Shame and a Scandal

to Religion) and is commonly the Cause of Ignorance and Irreligion.

1 Cor. 9. 7,
8, 10.

3. This *robbing of God* is a very great Wickedness also, because 'tis a base and a scandalous cheating the Labourer of his Hire; for Tithes and Offerings in every Parish was design'd as a Recompence to him that hath the Care of Souls, and if this Recompence be not paid him, he is evidently cheated of his Right, for God (to whom they were dedicated) allows 'em to no body else. He that does the Work deserves the Reward; therefore saith the Apostle, *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or, who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? For it is written in the Law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the Corn: Doth God take care for Oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? for our sakes, doubtless, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he who thresheth in hope, should partake of his hope.* Hence 'tis fully evident, that it is the Will of God, that he who preacheth the Gospel should live of the Gospel Reward, from that People to whom he preacheth. And therefore 'tis great Injustice, 'tis horrid Oppression, that instead of God's Wages, His Minister should be put off with any thing less. And yet, base as it is, thus God's Ambassadors are serv'd in every Vicaridge; the *Impropiators*, by colour of an Unjust Law, cheats and defrauds 'em of the greatest Share.

4. This

4. This kind of Sacrilege is also a prodigious Wickedness, because it has a natural Tendency to hinder God's Ministers from the faithful Discharge of their Duty: For they are oblig'd by their Office to speak in God's Name, and to do it with an unconfin'd Liberty of Speech; they must speak all out, and not shun to declare the whole Counsel of God; they must exhort and rebuke with all Authority, and dare undauntedly, in a commanding Strain, to utter the Word of Truth; they must deal impartially with all Men, and flatter no body; they must not respect the Person of the Rich, nor be afraid to reprove the Sins of the Mighty. And how can they have this necessary Courage, when they are reduc'd to Poverty, and their Minds depress'd with Grievs and Cares? What should support 'em to act answerable to their Character (unless God would give 'em the Power of Miracles again) when they are totally depriv'd of all worldly Assistance? Or with what Face shall a pitiful Underling encounter the solemn Looks of an oppressing Grandee? Or with what Hopes of Success, in his forlorn Habit, shall he venture to check the vicious Extravagancies of a ruffling Gallant: Is it likely that he should dare to contradict the Opinion, or to disallow the Practice, of a wealthy or powerful Neighbour, upon whose Benevolence he is forc'd to subsist? No, it is twenty to one if his Poverty don't tempt him to betray his Trust, and compel him to act more like a Minister of Darkness than God's Ambassador.

Lastly, This robbing of God is a horrible Wickedness, because it not only endangers the Souls of his Ministers, by tempting of 'em to the neglect of their

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Duty,

1 Tim. 4. 17.
Acts 20. 27.
Titus 2. 15.
Acts 14. 3.
Phil. 1. 14.

Dr. Barrow's
Works, Vol.
I. Pag. 173.

Duty, but 'tis also extreamly pernicious to the Souls of their Hearers: For though it be possible to find some who (by the Grace of God) are true to their Trust, notwithstanding their Poverty, yet it is very improbable, that their faithful Advice should be much regarded: But rather their moderate Confidence will be call'd Impudence, and their plain and open Sincerity of Speech, will be sty'd an unmannerly Presumption. And 'tis much to be fear'd, that they will do more Prejudice to Religion, by the Meanness of their Garb, than they can do to advance it by the Force of their Arguments: For Men don't regard the Words of such whose Persons they despise; and 'tis always the Lot of the Poor to be disesteem'd, let their Parts or their Office be what it will. So that if a Preacher's Condition ben't as well as his Pulpit, somewhat elevated above the lowest Station, most of his Endeavours will be Labour in vain; his faint Breath will raise but little Devotion in Mens benumm'd Hearts; his most pathetical Exhortations will, like himself, be generally flighted; and Vice and Prophaneness will thrive in his Parish, let him do what he can to the contrary, to the everlasting Destruction of many of his Flock.

Dr. Barrow,
Vol. I. p. 174.

These and several other Evils are the fatal Effects of robbing God, and impoverishing of his Ministers: And therefore,

4ly, It must needs be that this Nation is under a Curse, nay the very Sin it self is in some fort a National Punishment; for it evidently tends to the ruine of Souls. And if this be made light of, because it is not to be felt till after we are dead, God has also given us a taste of his present Displeasure; He hath mul-

multiply'd the Poor to a prodigious Degree, so that a Million a Year is too little for their Maintainance: And this is an evident Effect of Sacrilege; for they were always maintain'd with the Revenues of the Church, without any Charge to the Nation, till the Clergy were impoverish'd, and those who had gotten their Estates shak'd off the Poor, upon which an Act of Parliament was procur'd to lay 'em on the Parish. And if the Tithes were restor'd to God again, this Grievance would soon be remov'd: but otherwise 'tis like to be a growing Evil, and God in judgment will increase the Poor till they have eat up the Rich. And as this is a certain Consequence of robbing God, so 'tis very probable, that all other Judgments which have beset the Nation, were the just Recompence of the same Sin. And why should we think otherwise, seeing none of the Abominations which abound amongst us, can so properly be call'd National, as the robbing of God; and surely there is none that more justly deserves his Curse; for 'tis the greatest Affront that we can put upon the Deity: And therefore though it be not in our Power to reform this Wickedness, yet doubtless 'tis our Duty to Pray for a Reformation: For certainly, so long as it remains a National Sin, we shall frequently be plagu'd with National Punishments, and 'tis altogether impossible that it should be otherwise, because God, who is perfectly holy, is oblig'd, by the Rules of his eternal Justice, to punish Nations, as well as particular Persons, according to their Doings: Only this difference there is in his Proceedings between the Punishment of Private Men and Publick Societies, the Sins of Particular Persons may be punish'd either in this

There was no Parish Rates in England for the Relief of the Poor, but since the 43d of Q. Elizabeth.

this Life or in the next, as God sees good; but a National Wickedness must be accounted for in this present World, this being the only State in which a Nation, as such, can possibly be punish'd. Which Truth, if it be rightly consider'd, we have no reason to expect any thing but Wars and Troubles and Taxes, and a perpetual Increase of Poverty and a frequent Return of Publick Calamities, till *England* is made sensible of the Evil of Sacrilege, and restores unto God the Maintainance of his Ministers; for till that be done we are as much under his Curse as ever the Jews were.

'Tis therefore not only the Duty, but really the Interest of the Nation to render unto God the Things that are Gods, and to put away from us this Horrible Wickedness for which we are cursed, that so the fierce Anger of the Lord may be remov'd, and his Blessing bestow'd upon us and continued down to the Ages to come. Which that every one may endeavour to bring about, according to the various Condition and different Circumstances in which they are plac'd, from our Sovereign the Queen, that sitteth upon the Throne, to the meanest Free-holder in *England*, God of his infinite Goodness and Mercy grant, for the Sake and Merits of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.